

FORM B – BUILDING

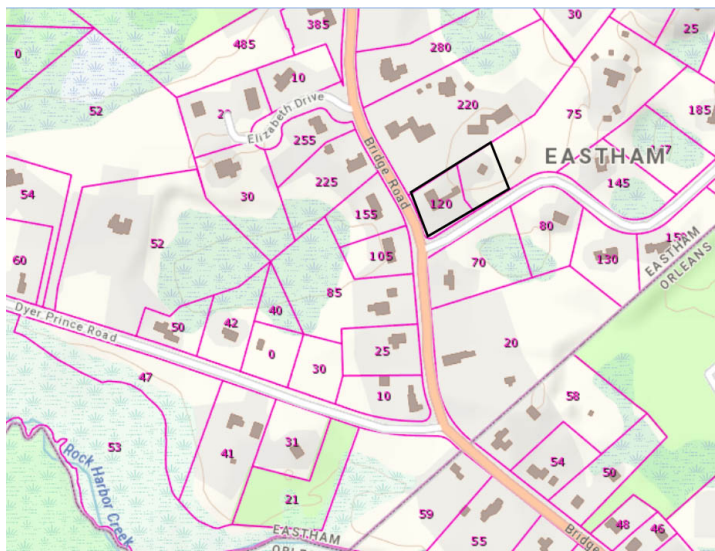
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



View from SE.

Locus Map (north at top)



Source: Mass GIS Oliver Parcel Viewer

Recorded by: Kathryn Grover & Neil Larson
Larson Fisher Associates
Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date: June 2020

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

20-59A

ORLEANS

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EAS.55

Town/City: Town of Eastham

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
South Eastham

Address: 120 Bridge Road

Historic Name: Sylvanus & Polly Smith House

Uses: Present: single-family residence

Original: single-family residence

Date of Construction: ca. 1856

Source: vital statistics, deeds, censuses

Style/Form: Greek Revival/cross-wing

Architect/Builder: Sylvanus Smith, probable builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation: stone

Wall/Trim: wood clapboard/wood

Roof: asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
studio

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Veranda added, 20th c.

Wing added south end, 20th c.

Garage wing added, 20th c.

Condition: good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.91

Setting: The property is located on a historic road among other 18th- and 19th-century houses. More recently, large lots have been subdivided with the addition of mid-20th-century dwellings.

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Sylvanus & Polly Smith, built ca. 1856, is a story-and-a-half wood frame single dwelling with a cross-wing plan; the house may contain features of a pre-existing house on the site. The front-gable section of the house has a steep roof edged with an entablature with a pronounced frieze. The first story is framed by wide corner pilasters that provide figurative support to an entablature running beneath the eaves on the side walls. The entrance is offset to one side; it has sidelights and trim of Greek proportions, though with the top lintel reduced by the porch roof. Two windows are located to one side of the doorway, and three upper-story windows are closely spaced in the gable. The fenestration reflects a side-passage plan with two principal rooms, with a chimney in the dividing partition, opposite the entry and hall. There is one window for each room on the north wall of the house. The front wall of the wing is in line with that of the front-gable section and contains three windows. Chimney placement corresponds with a plan with a kitchen on the larger side and pantry and back rooms on the smaller side. The roof edge of the wing is decorated in the same manner as the main section of the house. A veranda spans the entire front of the house and wraps around on the north side. Based on the materials and tooling, this feature appears to date late in the 20th century. What form of porch it replaced is not known, but there clearly would have been some form of shelter at the entrance. Additions and alterations are visible on the south side of the house. A low, one-story ell attached to the back of the wing contains the back door on a small porch set within a trellis. This ell appears to be an early feature, but another one-story wing engaged to the south end of the wing is much more recent. A dormer and skylight have been added to the back of the wing's roof. The ell was extended to attach a garage to the house. A wide breezeway between them is fronted by a gabled dormer.

The subdivision of the original farm has left the house on a one-acre lot and fronting on a new street: Goody Hallett Drive. Its siting perpendicular to Bridge Road may have been a solar orientation. The periphery of the house is landscaped, while a section restored to the house in 2000 is wooded. A small barn-like studio is located in this portion.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Local historians have not determined when Bridge Road was laid out between King's Highway and Rock Harbor, but some form of the road was probably in place from the mid-seventeenth century, and it appears on the 1795 Josiah Rogers map of the town. Rock Harbor in Orleans was a significant port in the packet trade to and from Boston, Salem, Maine, and the Canadian maritime provinces, and the shore west of where Bridge Road later took its turn to the north was the site of numerous saltworks until the mid-1800s. When the salt industry disappeared after 1840, houses to process and store fish taken in weirs in Cape Cod Bay replaced them. The northern part of the road was created in 1837, when the first bridge from which the road took its name was built over Boat Meadow Creek. The road connected with Samoset Road and at last connected Rock Harbor to Eastham center.

The house numbered 120 Bridge Road was probably built for Sylvanus Smith (1810-1880) in 1856 when he mortgaged property he inherited from his mother to John Doane of Orleans.¹ The building may contain an earlier house, Sylvanus's childhood home, built for his parents, Ephraim and Hannah Smith, about the time they married in 1806. Ephraim Smith (1783-1816), the youngest child of Joshua and Phebe Doane Smith, is listed in the 1810 Eastham census, but he died in 1816, possibly not in Eastham; his death is recorded only in the Boston newspaper *Columbian Centinel*. He and his wife, Hannah Smith (1781-1856), had one surviving son, Sylvanus, born in 1810, and the 1820 census lists her as head of a household with two males aged ten to sixteen, and in 1830 she is listed with only one male between the ages of 20 and 30, who must have been Sylvanus; she lived with him for the rest of her life.

In 1826 a portion of Ephraim Smith's estate was sold to pay his debts in the interest of Sylvanus, still a minor.² Sylvanus married Polly A. Smith in 1833; she was the daughter of Richard and Phebe Smith and only distantly related to him. By 1840 the census lists Smith as head of a household of four between the households of Henry Harding (85 Bridge Road) and Apphia Smith, his father's unmarried older sister. The 1850 federal census identifies Sylvanus Smith as a carpenter with \$330 in real property, and he lived with his wife, his mother Hannah, and his two children Sylvanus F., born in 1838, and Wilbur G., born in 1842. Son Sylvanus died in 1852; otherwise the household contained the same members in 1855. His mother died in 1856, and it was in

¹ Sylvanus Smith to John Doane (BCD 64:70); Doane discharged the mortgage in 1863 (BCD 70:454).

² Myrick Smith, guardian of Silvanus Smith, a minor son of Ephraim Smith deceased, 24 February 1826, BCD 5:146.

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that year that Sylvanus mortgaged the house and lot.³ The design of the house suggests that it was built at that time; whether it contains any of the pre-existing dwelling has not been determined. Being a carpenter, Sylvanus would have had some role in its construction. The 1858 Eastham map attaches the name "S. Smith" to the house, and in 1865 Sylvanus was living at 120 Bridge Road with his wife and son Wilbur, by then 22 years old and also working as a carpenter.

In 1869 Wilbur Smith married Mary Minerva Smith, the daughter of Captain Heman and Louisiana Smith of Eastham, and by 1870 the census credits Sylvanus with \$1100 in real property.⁴ The household then included him, his wife, son Wilbur, and Wilbur's wife. Sylvanus Smith died in May 1880, and son Wilbur, his wife Mary, and Wilbur's mother Polly were living at 120 Bridge Road. In addition to his carpentry Wilbur also ran a small farm of 17 acres; he had a cow, a calf, a pig, and brew hay, potatoes, and apples. In 1886 Sylvanus's widow Polly died, and the 120 Bridge Road property passed to Wilbur. In 1900 he was a farmer living in the house with his wife and their daughter Edith May, born in 1881. In 1902 Smith was taxed on seven acres of land, a dwelling worth \$700, a barn at \$150, a shop at \$40, a shed at \$75, and another outbuilding valued at \$85. He had a cow and 207 fowl. The 1905 Eastham map ascribes the name "W. G. Smith" to the property, and the three Smiths were listed together in the household in the 1910 census as well. Daughter Edith by then was an assistant postmaster, first in Orleans, then in Provincetown, and by 1923 again in Orleans; later in the 1920s she was also a correspondent for the *Hyannis Patriot*.⁵

In 1914 Wilbur G. Smith deeded the property to his wife, and he died in 1915. In 1920 his widow Mary (often called Minerva) and daughter Edith lived on Main Street in Orleans, but by 1929 they had returned to the Bridge Road house. Minerva Smith transferred her title to her daughter in 1935, and she died in January 1936.⁶ The 1940 census lists Edith alone in the house on Bridge Road. She was then the acting postmaster in Orleans.

Edith M. Smith died in 1962, and her will left the property to the executor of her will, Herbert D. Nickerson Jr. (1922-95), whose family had owned 20 Bridge Street for five generations. Nickerson deeded the property to himself and his wife, and in 1973 they divided the parcel; the next year they transferred title to the parcel to their married daughter Diane Nickerson Wojtkiewicz. She and her husband William sold the property in 1978, and in 2006 the further-subdivided parcel became the property of Christopher Thomas and Patricia A. Gill.⁷

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³ Sylvanus Smith acquired from his uncle Timothy Smith (born 1770) and aunt Apphia Smith (1774-1857) a four-acre parcel in 1845 (BCD 37:362) and half a house and a barn in 1847 (BCD 42:95). He mortgaged what appears from the names of abutters to be his house and five acres to John Doane of Orleans in 1856.

⁴ Mary Minerva Smith's parents both died in 1875. Heman Smith was master of the bark Burnside, and he had taken his wife on a farewell voyage on the vessel before his retirement; it was lost at sea. See Alice Albert Lowe, *Nauset on Cape Cod: A History of Eastham* (Falmouth, MA: Eastham Historical Society. 1968), 143.

⁵ Her move to Provincetown's post office is documented in "Orleans," *Yarmouth Register*, 27 July 1907, 8. She had been working at the Orleans post office since 1905.

⁶ Wilbur G. Smith to Mary M. Smith, 22 December 1914, BCD 338:134; Mary M. Smith to Edith M. Smith, 30 March 1935, BCD 510:125.

⁷ Herbert D. Nickerson Jr. to Herbert D. Nickerson Jr. and Margaret M. Nickerson, trustees, 20 August 1963, BCD 1215:152; Herbert D. Nickerson Jr. and Margaret M. Nickerson, trustees Smith-Nickerson Trust, to Diane Nickerson Wojtkiewicz, 15 March 1974, BCD 2070:77; William W. and Diane Nickerson Wojtkiewicz, Dover DE, to Alfons A. and Jacquelin T. Duffek, Chester CT, 24 November 1978, BCD 2828:221; Jacquelin T. Duffek, 120 Bridge Road, to Michael W. and Ina J. Cole, Red Hook NY, 31 December 2001, BCD 14646:151; Michael W. and Ina J. Cole, Red Hook NY, to Christopher Thomas and Patricia A. Gill, 16 March 2006, BCD 20868:235. See also Affidavit of Herbert D. Nickerson Sr, 25 April 1964, BCD 1248:200. The 120 Bridge Road property is Parcel 2 on "Plan of Land in Eastham, Mass. Made for Herbert D., Jr. & Margaret M. Nickerson," 27 November 1973, BCP 281:10, and Lot A on "Plan of Land in Eastham Being a Division of Parcels 1 and 2 as Shown on Barnstable County Registry of Deeds Plan Book 281, Page 10, Made for Jacquelin T. Duffek," 19 June 2000, BCP 559:27.

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SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES

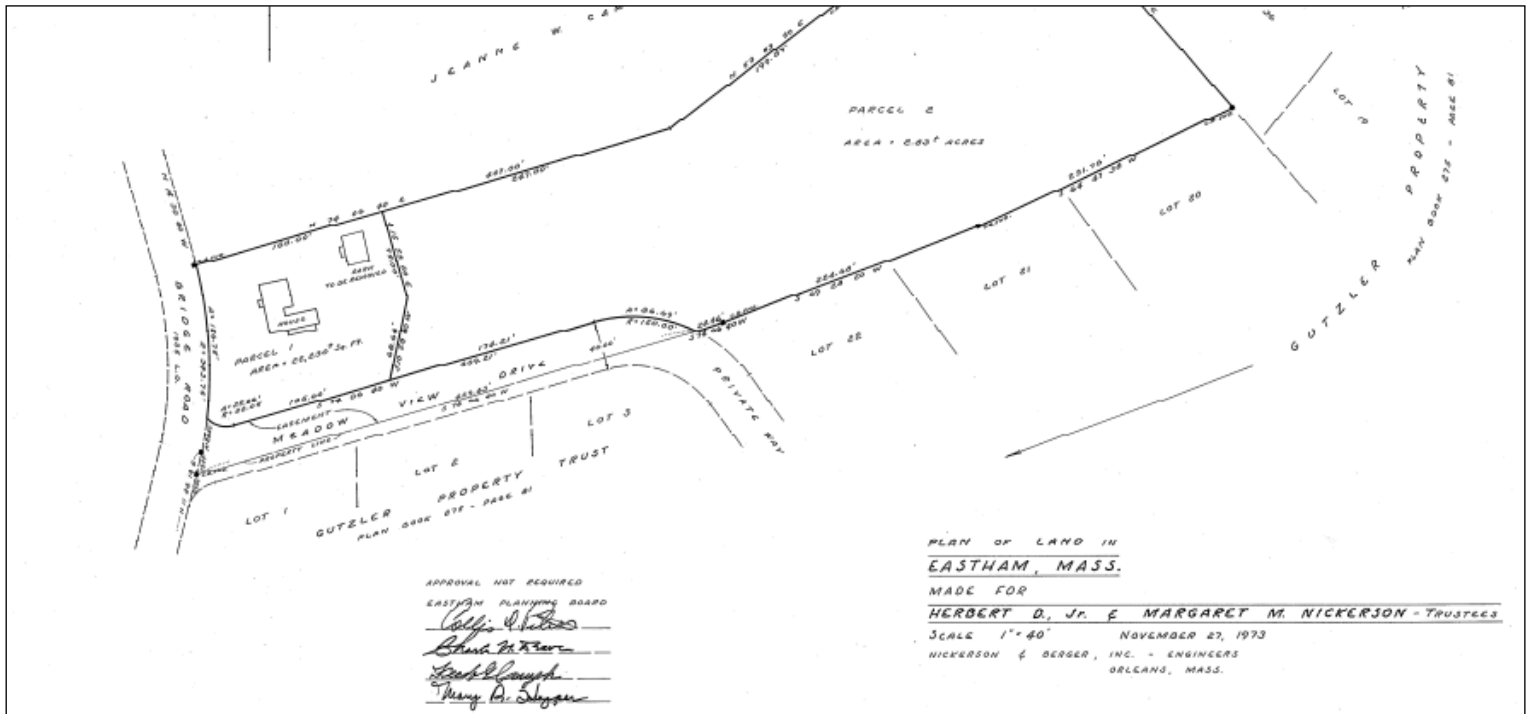


Fig.1: 1973 Nickerson plan depicts house on Parcel 1 of a subdivision at the intersection of Bridge Road and a new road that became Goody Hallett Drive (BCP 281:10).

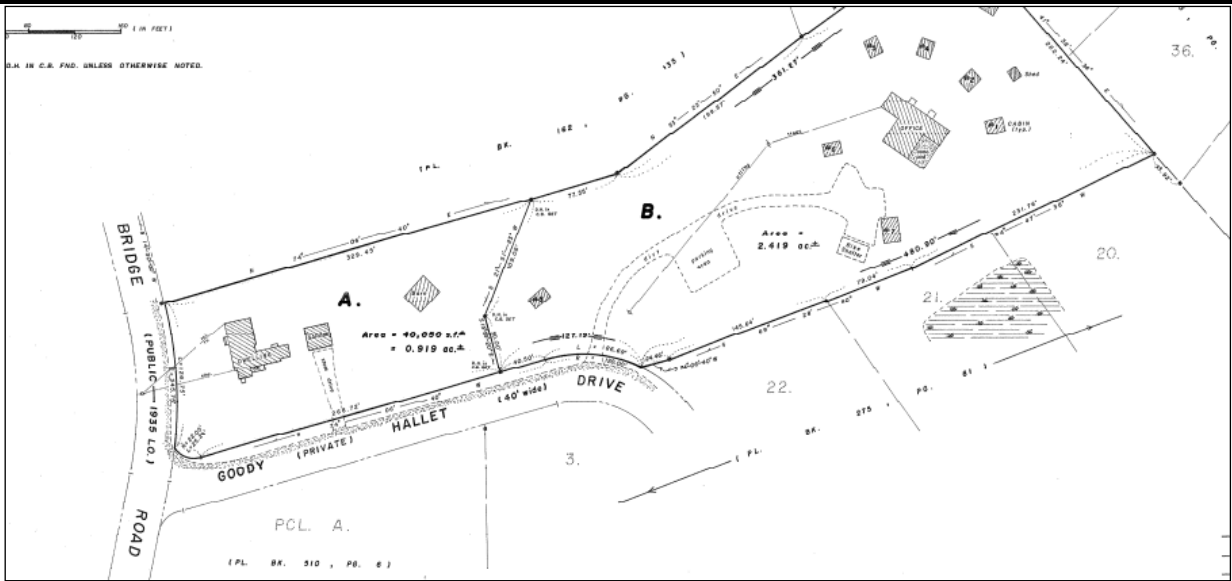


Fig. 2: Revised plan with a boundary increase made in 2000 by owner Jacquelin Duffek (BCP 559:27).

PHOTOGRAPHS

(credit Larson Fisher Associates, 2019 unless otherwise noted)



View from NW.

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View from south. Studio in background beyond garage.



View from SE.